

## Western States Seismic Policy Council 2008 Award in Excellence for Lifetime Achievement in Earthquake Risk Reduction

### Walter J. Arabasz



Walter J. Arabasz, Director of the University of Utah Seismograph Stations (UUSS), has had a career of lifetime success in establishing and implementing public policy for earthquake safety. For over thirty years, he has gone beyond his profession to work to achieve the greater societal goal of earthquake loss reduction.

Professor Arabasz has led the development of the University of Utah Seismograph Stations and the expansion and integration of earthquake monitoring nationwide. As Director he has had the vision, the will, and the capacity to expand his role and influence beyond that of a “network operator” to one of a spokesperson for and leader of earthquake loss reduction measures.

Walter has been actively involved, generally in a leadership role, in the progression of earthquake-related advisory groups in Utah from the Utah Advisory Council on Intergovernmental Relations Earthquake Task Force (1989-1991) to the Utah Earthquake Advisory Board (1991-1994) and finally the Utah Seismic Safety Commission (1994-present; Chair 1997-2001). These groups all advocated and promoted a broad earthquake awareness and loss-reduction program in Utah, and Walter, as the common denominator in all, is responsible for much of their progress toward that end.

Walter Arabasz has been, and continues to be, an effective communicator of earthquake risk to the people of Utah and their elected and appointed officials. He is regularly called upon to address conferences of emergency managers, building officials, engineers, and geologists to lend technical credibility to Utah’s earthquake hazard and risk. When he speaks of earthquake risk and risk reduction measures he does so with the wisdom and quiet authority he has acquired through years of experience and study. His assessments of earthquake risk problems and solutions are received with trust and respect.

As Director of the University of Utah Seismograph Stations, Walter has been untiring in his efforts to expand the capability of the stations to include real-time monitoring and notification and recording of strong earthquake motions for engineering and response purposes. He took the lead in obtaining federal funding to develop and implement a real-time earthquake reporting system that would be in place for the 2002 Winter Olympics.

Walter has been a leader in forming the concept, in the development, and in the implementation of the Advanced National Seismic System (ANSS). For over a decade he has promoted a cooperative, national approach to earthquake monitoring in which regional and national interests, State and Federal programs, work together for their mutual benefit for increased public safety in earthquakes nationwide.

In 2007 Arabasz was appointed to serve on the Advisory Committee on Earthquake Hazard Reduction, which was established by Congress to provide oversight and guidance to the four-agency National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program. Also in 2007, Walter received the John Wesley Powell Award of the U. S. Geological Survey in recognition of his “outstanding scientific leadership in helping the public and elected officials understand and reduce the impact of earthquakes”.

